Educational Oversight-Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of SwaN Global Education LLP, December 2022

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1   From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that SwaN Global Education LLP (the College) is making acceptable progress since the December 2021 monitoring visit.

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2   The College offers 15 Level 3 undergraduate pathways in the areas of Accounting, Business, Economics, Marketing, Education, Engineering, Human and Health Science, Law, Mathematics, Arts and Humanities, Science, Computer Science and Sociology/Social Policy; 11 Level 6 undergraduate pathways; and nine stage one, Level 6/7 postgraduate pathways. Student numbers on individual pathways range from one to 17 students.

3   Overall recruitment for 2022-23 is projected as 559 compared with 346 for 2021-22. However, data from the annual monitoring return indicates that student numbers have increased from 157 in 2021 to 189 students in 2022. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, East Asia made up 50% of recruitment, but this has now fallen to 17%. The College attributes the fall in recruitment from this area to issues associated with the pandemic, flight availability and competition from neighbouring countries. The shortfall has been made up by diversifying recruitment to other countries including Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India and the Middle East. The College has worked with the Swansea University Recruitment Team to provide additional support for these students regarding accommodation, cost of living and schooling for their dependants.

4   The College has a total of 27 members of staff - 22 full-time and five part-time - compared with 14 full-time and one part-time in December 2021.

5   Programmes continue to be managed by the College Director/Principal, Director of Academic and Student Experience, Director of Marketing and Recruitment. The College has appointed a School Education Lead in place of the Director of Learning and Teaching who retired during the summer. This appointment aligns the staffing structure of the College with the revised university faculty structure. The Education Lead is responsible for the implementation of the strategic priorities in learning, teaching and assessment, and student experience.

6   Since the review in 2021, the College has returned to face-to-face teaching and in-person studying and assessment. There have been no other major changes since the December 2021 review.

Findings from the monitoring visit

7   The College has continued to update and monitor the Student Experience Action Plan (paragraph 9). Student engagement is being strengthened through the appointment of a Student Engagement Academic Lead, training for student reps, the establishment of a

WhatsApp group, and student-staff forums. Students are invited to attend the formal College committees, but have yet to participate in them (paragraph 10). The good practice in the form of flexible, responsive and accessible student support has been further developed through the continuation of blended learning, a live chat function and the introduction of disability support pro formas (paragraph 12); and specific support for the return to in-person examinations (paragraph 14), the introduction of mental health awareness for teaching staff (paragraph 16), and the development of a 'resilience module' to support students (paragraph 15). The College continues to refer students to the Centre for Academic Success (paragraph 13).

8   Staff access a range of staff development opportunities through the University and Navitas (paragraph 16). A system of Annual Programme Review has been implemented (paragraph 18) and the College has responded to the recommendations of the Navitas and university reviews (paragraph 19). Progression to the University indicates that the course effectively prepares students for their degree programmes (paragraph 20). The College continues to use the University as its key external reference point, but also makes use of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) (paragraphs 21; 22).

9   The Student Experience Action Plan is the main document for recording actions required as a result of student feedback and various monitoring reports. Some of the actions set out in the plan, such as formal peer support, have not been implemented due to the pandemic when the majority of students were not on campus. However, online events, to support the transition from the College to University were held together with 'lunch and learn' lectures on various topics including 'The Influence of Industry on Operations Management in the Age of Covid'. The College intends to reinstate a full transition programme for students progressing to the University during 2022-23.

10   Student engagement is being supported by one of the subject leads who has taken on additional responsibility and become the Academic Lead for Student Engagement. A WhatsApp group has been set up which enables student reps to communicate with one another, raise issues with the Academic Lead for Student Engagement, put forward their views to college staff, and organise social events. Student reps undertake training for their role via the Students' Union. They can provide feedback to the College through the Student Forum meetings and have been invited to attend meetings of the Education Committee and the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC). Students have access to the meeting papers for these committees; however, the student reps with whom the team met indicated that they had not attended any of the formal college meetings. The College intends to work with the University's Student Partnership and Engagement team to establish the best means of communication with reps and is undertaking further work with the Students' Union to encourage students to be more involved with the College Forums and Committees.

11   Students are also able to provide feedback regarding their courses through module evaluations at the end of each module, the Student Experience Survey (SES) and the Your Experience Survey (YES). Response rates for the SES survey are 24.8% for 2021 and 26.7% for 2022. Response rates for the YES survey have increased from 13.5% in 2021 to 50% in 2022 as a result of student reps promoting the need to complete the surveys. The action required in response to these two surveys has been embedded into the College's Student Experience Action Plan.

12   The College has continued to provide flexible, responsive and accessible support that reflects the needs of its students. Blended learning continued through the summer of 2022, supporting students both on and off campus, and a live chat function has remained in place for current and new students. Enrolment sessions are recorded and put on Canvas (the student portal). Students who have additional support needs are asked to complete a pro forma and during enrolment, they are given advice about the support available through

their personal tutor and via the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication (ILSC) module. The Basic Academic Survival Kit 21/22 has been revised following feedback from students and is now rebranded as the 'Essential Study Skills Guide'. Students indicated that they were aware of the guide, which is available through Canvas, but they had not used it extensively.

13   Cases of academic misconduct are referred to the Centre for Academic Success (CAS) which provides one-to-one sessions to help students understand why they have been penalised for plagiarism and other areas of academic misconduct. This includes a specific session with Chinese translation of the key points. Feedback from students who attended the CAS sessions is positive as it provided an opportunity for them to ask specific questions about their work, practice their English Language and identified further sources of support to improve their academic skills - in particular, referencing. However, as attendance at the CAS sessions is voluntary, not all students take advantage of the academic guidance offered. The College is reviewing how to improve attendance at the CAS sessions for the next academic year.

14   The College provided support for the return to in-person examinations, as many students had not sat examinations for some time due to the pandemic. A PowerPoint guide to exams, a student checklist for exams, a list of do's and don'ts, and some frequently asked questions were uploaded to Canvas. Academic leads advertised office hours and an additional 30 minutes was added to the time allotted to examinations. Feedback from students regarding the support they received for their examinations, is positive.

15   Since the pandemic, the College has noted a change in the resilience of students, with more students raising concerns about their mental health, accessing welfare support and submitting extenuating circumstances for assessments. To address this, the College is introducing a 'resilience module' which will be compulsory for the next academic year. The module is non-credit bearing and students will receive a pass/fail for the module which, if they pass, will be added to their Higher Education Achievement Report. The module aims to help students manage their wellbeing, access support where necessary, and develop their time management and self-directed learning skills. The module, which will run in all three semesters, will be reviewed at the end of the academic year.

16   Staff continue to access staff development opportunities offered through Navitas and Swansea University. This has included mental health training and ways in which to engage students in online learning. Staff at the College have contributed to staff development through writing articles for a Navitas magazine and presenting case studies at the University and the Navitas Learning and Teaching Conferences.

17   A standardised structure has been developed for all Canvas pages and the students with whom the review team met indicated that the virtual learning environment is easy to navigate and provides the information they require about their programme and modules. Staff indicated that the site includes guidelines for moderation and assessments, including a standard assessment brief template. The staff handbook has been revised to support staff returning to in-person teaching.

18   The College undertakes annual programme review in December, and a module review form has been trialled which will feed into the review process in 2022. The reports are considered by the College's Education Committee which is also responsible for monitoring the action plans.

19   Navitas undertook a review of the College during 2021 and the recommendations from this review are being addressed through the implementation of the College annual programme review process, the development of an online operations manual and improved attendance monitoring in accordance with Navitas processes. In response to

recommendations made by the University of Swansea monitoring review, the College is now using the format of the University risk register and has developed a succession plan.

20   The data provided by the College in respect of student progression indicates that 137 international students progressed to Swansea University in 2021-22 compared with 149 in 2020-21; 97 home students progressed to Swansea University in 2021-22 compared with 73 in 2020-21. Average progression to Swansea University for all levels for both home and international students is 94% for 2021-22, compared with 83% for 2020-21, and 94% for 2019-20. Student achievement in terms of the percentage of students receiving a 'good grade' is variable across modules. The College indicated that this is monitored by the academic leads, through the assessment boards and action is taken to support students in those modules where they are performing less well.

Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

21   Swansea University is the main external reference point for the College. All module credits are approved by the University's faculties/Schools and forwarded to Swansea University Programme Approval Committee. Staff indicated that they rely on the module guides and material provided by the University to ensure that they are maintaining standards and teaching at the appropriate level. Subject Benchmark Statements and the requirements of professional bodies, such as the Institute of Marketing and AAC, also provide an external reference point.

22   The College uses the Quality Code to enhance learning opportunities for students and this is demonstrated by the standardisation of the Canvas pages, the support for students in the transition from the College to their university programme, and the appointment of an Academic Lead for Student Engagement. The members of staff with whom the review team met, indicated that they use the Quality Code to enhance their teaching.

Background to the monitoring visit

23   The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

24   The monitoring visit was carried out by Brenda Eade, Reviewer, and Millard Parkinson, QAA Officer, on 13 December 2022.